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Title: Audra Winter, paracosm worlds, autism, and the fear of editing text

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0:00
Hi, my name is Jolie Black. Welcome to the video. I am going to be talking
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today about whole order of winter drama. I'm not really a drama person. No,
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that's a lie. I I my guilty pleasure is following YouTube drama. We might come
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back to that. I am actually a post-doal researcher at Major UK University. I've
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got a couple of my latest is in ancient magic and I have been following the
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order of winter drama for about the last 10 days and yes I am procrastinating
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over it. I'm very interested. I wanted to make a video that isn't about the
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need for an editor or the text itself, but about the issues with being young
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and autistic and having written a piece of work and having a major fantasy world that is your psychological support. I am
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not a psychologist. I study ancient magic. I research around presentation of
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the self and performance theory at the moment. That is my major focus. So I
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have been working on how drugists and medical people and magical people from
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Greco Roman Egypt sold themselves as experts to their market as they tried to
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find people to sell to because this was a free and open market where literally
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everyone was on the same playing field. So that's kind of my background and what I've been do working on for the last
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three or four months. I did do a piece for my newsletter a couple of weeks ago talking about that angle about how she

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had created a character that was essentially doing what I do. Like that's my wheelhouse. And I wanted to examine
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how much plot and interesting stuff she could have gotten out of doing that and
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the mistakes that she was making on the first and second page around the character and what she was doing. But
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actually, what I want to do is really focus in on how Audra presents herself
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and how this has kind of hit the internet so hard with so many people saying, "Oh, I remember being 12 years
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old and having a fantasy world and this is my heart story and all of this." A lot of people have been saying the same
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kind of thing obviously around you maybe should step away from that. You shouldn't get too involved in your
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fantasy world to the extent that it is your entire life. Uh, I wrote a second piece that was more of a deep dive into
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my history because this was me and I am now 46 47 which you can tell I am in my
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tired crone era now and I'm not doing makeup. I barely do my hair. Sorry Henry
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if you ever watch this. I I do apologize. Your hard work has been made to look terrible on my head. Now what I
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want to talk about is how orderer has come so fixated on this world and what I
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can kind of contribute to this conversation is the perspective of having been that
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20 young 20some with a world that was absolutely everything who found somebody
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to talk to about it and got caught up in the idea of being an author and putting
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their work out and it being huge and everybody engaging with it and loving it and the crash and burn that happens when
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that doesn't go the way you want it to go. Now, I'm mostly going to be working
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from the scope today. So, uh just because I'm utterly terrible at this, as
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you can probably tell, this is like video number three. So, I'm actually going to focus in there. I will come
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back to this but my background in terms of writing is I do still write fiction and I still write fiction in the same
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world but I have moved on and been through a whole process. So I'm going to discuss that process today, how that
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relates to the presentation and how we present ourselves on the internet, especially wanting to answer this core
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question of why won't look at the text? Why won't she edit her
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own text? Why? Despite all of the claims that she has editors, that she has a
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developmental editor, that she has a line editor, and that she is doing a minor in creative writing, why is she
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not actually doing that basic work? Why is she not doing that most essential piece of work? And I think I can kind of
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speak to that, particularly as a as an autistic person who was young on the internet, um, putting out a piece of
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work and really struggling with that aspect of it. Hopefully this will kind of contribute something useful to the
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discussion that we don't get into a cycle of going round and round saying why won't you look at this text I doubt
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Audra will ever see this video but it might be useful context for her to step
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back and think about these kind of things as well and if you are someone who's I don't know young and in your
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20ies and this has scared you for putting out your work this will also help I hope so here we go this is a
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basic background or winters she's 22 year old. She she says she's autistic ADHD. She self-published a young adult
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novel at the end of June after at least 5 years of hyping it up on TikTok and she has completely crashed out because
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the book has not lived up to expectations. This is not unusual these
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days. At times I'm going to maybe use the word performance and performative in
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this. I don't use it that much, but just occasionally when it comes up. There are two different meanings of the word and
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the way that the word is used in non-academic discourse and online. Performative is often used to mean lying
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or that there is a lie and that you're putting on an act that is fake. I'm kind of using it in the more academic sense
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which is much more neutral. There is a whole sphere of study that is performance theory and performance
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studies. And when we talk about performance and something being performative, we are talking about something having
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aspects of performance as it's understood in the academic sense. So putting on display, using particular
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objects, using particular times and atmospheres to produce that kind of
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performance. But we're not adding that layer of macity to it. That's just something to kind of bear in mind at
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this point. I have actually written this out several times. I sort of now trying
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a video. This is extreme procrastination because I should be working on my own fiction
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and I should be researching for a piece that's going to be published in March next year.
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Watching videos about this kind of thing is one thing, but actually potentially adding to a pileon is potentially
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unhealth unhelpful. So Audra dropped another video on Monday and yeah that's a whole oh god thing as
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the ripples have hit book and I've had tons and tons of videos my favorite creators thoughts are coming out
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hopefully soon. It seems like a common trait for those of us who follow drama.
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We all want to get as many takes as possible. So here's my take basically. I

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did go on a bit of a journey with this. I I was pretty sympathetic to Audra when
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she released her first video in early August. I think late July, early August,
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and the long apology, I didn't really look at it as things stood when I wrote.
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I thought that an earnest apology might have helped getting off the internet and
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spending more time working on the book could rescue this. I looked through Goodreads when it was still frozen. It's
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unfrozen now and the score has gone up a little bit, but I looked at Goodreads and the reviews were people desperately
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wanting this to be good. They were very invested in order of story. They were
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very invested in her excitement about the world. And I know having been that
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person that some people do get they get really invested in the story of this person could go out there and be an an
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incredible success. Wouldn't that be awesome? We would all love that, you know. And they were invested from the
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astrology side. It had a lot of elements that were interesting to people and they wanted to read it. And I think that was
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kind they were kind of upset more that they've been let down and they wanted this to be good rather than trashing on
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it completely. Now, I kind of left it at that and then I watched Meredith
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Novacico's 2-hour deep dive that shifted my opinion. I will put links to
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everything in the description below, including my original piece for Substack and Patreon on there. I really hadn't
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digested the big statement video and I really should have done that was, you know, failure on my part. Audra updated
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with a new video last Monday which needs discussion and I suspect that a lot of
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the creators following this are going to do update videos as well. Plus I am recording on Sunday the 17th of August.

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She has been updating every Monday since this all started to happen. So I am
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curious to see whether there is an update. I might hold off publishing this
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until there is an update. Now, I suspect a lot of creators are actually going to have to do updates. I know Books with
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Laura has done an update already, sort of looking at the video from last week and saying, you know, really this is not
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it. The value of going through this again is I can explain some of the issues that Meredith raises with Order's
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first big video from the 7th of August. I can talk about the being a young
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autistic wannabe writer perspective, but also from the perspective of being 46. I
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am 47 in two months. Less than two months. Oh god. I'm now going to take
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some coffee before I dig into that because that's a thing.
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That's good coffee. My partner buys good coffee. I agree with Meredith's overall
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take. much. My first position is I agree with Meredith's position. Um, I was so
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tempted to say Nova code 2025 in a very academic way. I hope she appreciates
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that. Um, I have linked her video hopefully down below. So, watching
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Orura's video and the update posted on Monday the 11th of August got me really
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thinking about the journey that I went on and the difficulties associated with
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writing about a huge fantasy world that is essentially more than just a world
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you have created in order to write a book, but is a paracosm. And I'll come back to that. being autistic theories
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around performance and some odd links to research I've done around ritual non you know non-performance for a book chapter I'm working on right now so just to kind
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of pause in my first piece on this I did explain a paracosm is more than a
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fantasy world it is a huge world that you daydream about you work on it is how

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you process the world and it was how I and it still is how I process the
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So to give you uh a live example, I have a problem. Say I have to go to hospital
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for something. So I I had to have surgery back in October last year and part of my world is that it has a huge
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magical version of a free health care system. So I get to sit in bed and every
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time they bring a machine in and do some work on, you know, taking tests or blood pressure or whatever it is, I'm
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thinking, oh well, how does this work in amnot? How do they do this in amnar? How might it be different in amnar? What are
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the mechanics behind that? So, I'm obviously anxious about having surgery, but that helps me to process what I'm
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experiencing. You know, my partner's over there in the corner working on his things. He's an IT professional. So,
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when he is talking about his IT stuff, I'm thinking, "Oh, how would that work in Amna?" because they have a big
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magical database system and I need to figure out how that works and how are they storing that information within the
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physical materials of the world which is what they do. So that is really the best
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way to describe a paracosm. You daydream about it when you have a bad experience.
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You have the comfort almost like Invisible Friends of being able to
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reexperience it in a safer context of your own fantasy world
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and it, you know, it can go on into adulthood. It seems to be now I I don't
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think there's really much research on it. I found it awkward at first to say I think this is my special interest or one
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of my autistic special interests and that contributes to it.
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So that is basically what I think is going on. This is just my personal opinion. I'm not I I'm not a
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psychologist. I can't diagnose in any way, but I suspect that that is what the
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Age of Scorpius world is to Audra. I think it is a paracosm. I think it is
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vast and I think it probably has a huge emotional impact based on the videos I've seen. She does one video where
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she's listening to her artist team talk about the world and they're discussing
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the characters as though they're real and just and yeah. Yeah. That the fact that she's just so excited by this.
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It is so over and it can be really really overwhelming. So I think that is
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potentially what the world is for her. Now before we get started and I deep
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dive into that, I'm going to just provide a bit of a timeline. if you are unfamiliar with the story and I think
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also to get sort of a context of Audra and her journey on Tik Tok and the book
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talk space. This is adapted from again u Meredith Novako's incredibly hard work
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and deep dive and hours and hours of watching Audrey's videos and I will say
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also reading the book so she you know really is doing the Lord's work out there. Thank you very much for doing
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that. that helps. Audra claims that she started in 2018. Uh there are no videos
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from that time that I can find. In 2021, she begins posting introducing her world
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and she features maps and arts that she believes that I believe she must have commissioned herself. So, I have
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incarnate and I know how hard it is to learn a new software system. I'm not a
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natural at it at all. I've had some help that I I know that that would take absolutely hours and hours and hours of
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work. I think the maps were commissioned. So, she was, you know, she's pouring effort and time and money into it. I
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know how, you know, how difficult that can be. So, it all but also exciting it brings it to life. She also states that

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she's looking for a literary agent. She self-published the Zodiac Turner, aged 14. That seems to be the original
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version of the Age of Scorpius. And it was based on a world that she, as she says, she gets she developed from the
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age of 12. And you really will get tired of hearing about that. All of her videos either introduce an aspect of the world
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or somehow relate to her as a young author and she'd be kind of I guess like
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18, 19 at this time. They're all really well done. She really gets how to do
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book talk. So in 2021 in November, she gets representation. I'm not going to
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state the literary agent. She mentions she does mention the literary agent. Um, stick a pin in that. We will come back
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to it. Audra actually dropped off Tik Tok for the most part after this except
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for a few posts here and there. There's one about a tattoo. There are a couple of others. She seemed to be working on
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revisions for the novel. And if you are unfamiliar with that whole process of having a literary agent, uh, I have
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several friends who have literary agents and are published multiple times. There
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is a long period of going back and forth with the literary agent once you've got one and making changes, making
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adjustments. Often whole rewrites and quite a lot of reworking goes on at that point before you even go to a publisher
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and get put in front of an acquisition's editor. It can take quite a long time to even get to a publisher. So that's 2021.
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Now she kind of disappears until 2024, apart from these few videos. She starts posting again. She's lost her agent and
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she has decided to self-publish via Kickstarter. Meredith brings this up and someone in
16:48
her comments highlights that you only get charged by Kickstarter if the book
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goes ahead, if or the item goes ahead or whatever it is you're doing. So, nobody
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will have lost any money when she withdrew. It was just cancelled. There's no real loss there. It is interesting. I
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think maybe some emotional psychological tension around whether they could get it
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published. She she focuses very much on trying to get a viral video so that she
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can get enough people to sign up to the Kickstarter. That hits her whole thing.
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The getting a viral video, day one of getting a viral video, day two of getting a viral video. really having
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gone through all of her videos, it gets really quite tiring. So all of her content is kind of that or
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the fallout from the November 2024 election and latching her book and her
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creative output and what she's planning to write about or what she has written about on LGBTQ people fighting back
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against oppressive authority. Yeah, great. I love that idea. She sometimes
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talks about it being Hunger Games based YA dystopian fiction. That's the kind of
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vibe she's going for, but very definitely attaching it onto the energy of that time, which you know, I can kind
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of understand. Now, obviously, she has lost the momentum that she had in 2021
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when lots of people were very excited because who wouldn't be thrilled when they got some literary agent? I know
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when friends of mine have gotten literary agents and it's it's just huge cause for celebration.
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So, she finally decides that she's not going to do the Kickstarter. She
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abandons that and she says that the reason why she's not going to do the Kickstarter is she wants more control
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over what she's going to do and she wants to just put it out as a book. She's going to self-publish and this
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will happen on Tik Tok shop in early 2025. She posts a great deal actually
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about editing and having an editor and being on a deadline to send things to an
19:02
editor. Even a developmental editor is mentioned in there. She calls herself an entrepreneur and starts using this term
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team. And even more frequently just dressing in the style that people have been calling Elizabeth Holmes 2.0, which
19:16
I think there is a as a kind of a tangent might not put this in but I have
19:21
a little bit of a problem connecting someone who has gone to prison because
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they made fake devices on which people relied for medical survival and
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comparing that to self-publishing a bad book problematic but also the aesthetic
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is there the performative aesthetic of the black top and the the one piece
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piece of jewelry, the blonde hair pushed back, the way she began to talk, all of
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that is there. Those elements are there. It's a really hard shift and you get a
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bit of whiplash from her very early witchy content, talking about herself as
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a polytheist, talking about herself being interested in Greek gods and Greek
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religion and giving aesthetics for Greek gods. Wave, go off. You know, I I love
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those kind of ideas. But then she hard pivots to I'm an entrepreneur pretending to be a Silicon Valley tech bro. I I
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don't understand. It's very strange. So, she spends all of this time kind of building up and talking about how she's,
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you know, she's putting the books out. She's finding the right publisher. She is anti- AI. She fights people who are
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saying that the aunt is AI. And I don't think that is an issue. I think she's clearly anti- AI, which is weird
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considering the tech bro aesthetic. the she self-publishes in June. She
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sends out thousands of copies and reviews start to come in. The Goodreads score hits a low of 1.73. I think it had
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clambered up to 2 something when I checked yesterday. I was able to confirm
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Meredith's point about somewhere down the line order has muddied the water around this issue of the agent. And I
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also agree with Meredith that there is some kind of lying or uncertainty going
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on that not that much of a big deal but it's going to come into my point about performance and the presentation of self
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that and self- mythology that I want to highlight. So Audra does make two
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claims. So, first of all, she just says, "I was dropped by my agent." And then in later videos, she goes on to claim,
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"Firstly, the agent stopped representing science fiction and fantasy, and neither the agents own site nor the agency backs
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this up. They are still very interested in that. Knowing the way the trad
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publishing world works, I would find it very weird for a literary agent who has
21:50
a set of interests and they represent people based on their interests to suddenly decide that they don't want to
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do that anymore. Fantasy and science fiction are huge right now. Why would they not want to represent that? So her
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second point is that she chose to end the relationship to self-publish because
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she wanted to maintain creative control. So Audra's first videos after the break,
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as I said, they are pretty clear that she was dropped by her agent. She just outright says, "I was dropped by my
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agent." And I I think this is likely kind of what happened. I think what she
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says later is probably going to play into this idea of self- mythology and
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performativity. I think she is self- mythologizing. This is just personal
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opinion. This is my read as a non-sychologist. I teach the history of mental illness
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and the growth of psychology, but I am not a psychologist. I think it factors
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into explaining some of what's happened since the publication. I think if it was me and I'd gone through this and I had
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been dropped by my agent because I wasn't someone they could work with, the 3:00 a.m. nightmare scenario is I'm not
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good enough for this and that's the proof. I've been dropped by my agent. I think there's a degree to which you can
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overlap that with there are other reasons why this has happened. So, lots of stuff could be going on in the
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background and we don't know and obviously I can't see into our head respinning. But I can imagine how you
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might find ways to respin that so that it hurt less. In July 2025, responses
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start coming in. So, she published at the end of June, June 27th. By early July, people have finished reading the
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book or they've given up and they are not positive. As I said at the beginning, everyone was kind of
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sympathetic. Everyone felt this was a first draft. It lacked plot development, a decent command of sentence structure
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and writing craft. It's all over the place. Uh Meredith does a deep dive into it. She got to page 120, I think, and
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she says she just couldn't read beyond that point and didn't want to. It wasn't
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necessary. I read the first two chapters or I tried to read the first two chapters that that Audra had put out for
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free on her Patreon and oh god no. Um
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very very difficult to follow. struggled to read it just from a basic what is even happening here. Essentially, she
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gives away the whole mystery of an interest in the novel in the first paragraph and it all goes downhill from
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there. I think everyone was really encouraging and going well you know first novel
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self-published you know please try harder. Now, initial responses in text from Audra say initially said that this
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was her voice and because she was writing a neurode divergent character, she was just presenting those thoughts
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that way. Yes, but you still have to make it comprehensible to people who were reading the book and lots of people
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have written neurode divergent characters very successfully. As an autistic person myself, I don't think
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you can use that as an excuse. You still need to edit your writing. I would rather be readable and understood to be
25:05
honest. On August the 4th, Audra does her first response video, and this is where she
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breaks out the Black Turtleneck. She says she's going to re-release the book in December. The team is going to
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do new art. They'll hire a copy editor and developmental editor from the audience, which oh boy. And she will
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drop the price of the new pre-order. this doesn't go down well. This is where people start to shift from no please
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like again still quite sympathetic. There are people who are still like I I will still read this. I will still
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engage with this. Most of the a you know the audience is heading towards being unhappy because it is really important
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when you do those videos to get that right. But you know people are becoming more critical of her responses. Then we
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have August the 8th coffee. The long non-apology video comes out. uh order
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steps up to accept that the book wasn't what people hoped. As the internet is now, there is an established rhetorical
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style for apology videos and they come with a particular expectation. The focus
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has to be on the audience, the people who have been harmed, acknowledging that
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harm, acknowledging and laying out attempts to do better, a path forward.

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There are rules. There are performance rules around
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dressing in a particular way, looking a particular way, speaking in a particular way. It is a performance and it has an
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associated ritual context to it that is particularly fascinating. That is not
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suitable for this video, but I am going to link down below. Maker's Rhetoric is
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a great channel. She does some internet drama. I love her for internet drama.
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But she takes it from the perspective of studying it from a rhetorical point of view that is academic. She is examining
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both performance, the rhetoric between audience and creator. And she has done a
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deep dive on the absolutely infamous ukulele video that you know videos like
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that where they break the rules become legendary. an apology that works and is effective and it is your first apology
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and you are a small relatively small creator on the internet that's going to
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be taken with much more sympathy and much more trust than say the various
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people who have made non-apology videos in recent years. If you are interested in looking at that kind of analysis, it
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is really interesting to think about how we have certain expectations for apology videos and breaking them becomes
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legendary. Response video is not an apology and it kind of triggers the sort
27:50
of response that you would expect from that. Meredith, I think, gives a strong sense of of how distressing it is to be
27:58
on the receiving end of a person putting out publicly that the fallout from this
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affected their mental health really severely. Now, Audra in this video focuses
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entirely on herself, her response, what happened to her, how devastated she was.
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She stops eating. She is completely unable to function. She insists that she was told the book
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was ready and didn't edit really or proofread and do final checks because
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she was busy doing bookmarks and preparing pre-orders. This was an excuse that she made quite
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early in July as well in text format. She goes into really extreme territory.
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This world is her life. She's used it as a support process to extremely, you know, difficult times. And you can see
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from her Tik Tok, she has been through a natural disaster. She has been through an awful lot of really difficult things
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and she has used the world to cope with that. This world is her everything and she relies on it emotionally which I is
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why I'm think it might be a paracosm and why you need to treat that slightly differently to a fantasy world that
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you've entirely created just to write books as a professional author. The end she she steps back from that. She says,
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"I'm going to overcome this." She gives this the kind of the classic I will come back from this speech. But again there
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is no reference to the audience. There is no sense of apology. There is no feeling that she has considered the
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audience's feelings and their attitudes beyond talking about hatred. beyond
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talking about she feels that she was attacked and she feels that everyone
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hates her and it was awful and that she had to have protect anti-bullying
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protections put in place on Tik Tok which I you know I couldn't find
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responses like that not to the degree that I would expect somebody the
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internet absolutely awful place people can be horrendous and I can fully
30:04
understand you would want to step back when that happens. But that was not the feeling I was getting. People were still
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sympathetic pretty early on. Meredith also points out in this video, and this is important, Audra has developed a

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narrative that says all all of this comes down to one negative response video, a review video that provides
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initial feedback that was negative. And that up until this point, everyone had
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loved the book, but then this video comes out that's negative and everyone changes their mind. One video can change
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everything is her story. So obviously not true. Meredith's work shows that
30:42
negative reviews came in from early July. I've gone back and I've looked through the Goodreads page and yes, the
30:48
negative reviews were early July. Order responded to them with that claim that her main character was neurode divergent
30:55
which is icky and upsetting and not good. So we know that this idea, this
31:02
narrative is not actually what was going on, but Audra has found a way to explain
31:09
what is going on that sits outside herself, that is not down to her, not looking at the text. So now we get to
31:16
Monday, the 11th of August, and then we have another video that is her businessy weekly response video. and she responds
31:24
to her audience's insistence that this feels like her first draft maybe written by a 12-year-old.
31:30
She says she's getting an editor, a copy editor, and developmental editor involved. And her team are going to go
31:37
through the book chapter by chapter with an aim to release in March. So, she's pushed it back a bit to March. This is
31:43
an eight-step process according to her. And if you're a writer, you're going to look at this and think, "Oh my god, what the fuck?" hours of meeting with the
31:51
team, then a three-hour meeting with Sorie, who's one of the artists behind the project, and she calls him an
31:56
artist, I think he's artistic director, and he's going to draw things based on what Audra says, and then Audra will
32:02

write that up, which she describes as simple, only one stage in this process really is about the text itself. Even
32:10
more art, even more maps, sprayed edges, all the rest of it. Not what anybody wants. Everybody wants to look at the
32:16
text. So, some people say she needs to do a graphic novel because her focus is so
32:22
much on the art. And I I do have concern about Sor's position in this. And again,
32:30
let's put a pin in that because it's going to come back to my story and where this comes in. So, the intensity will
32:36
intensify. Overall, obviously, again, not what people want to hear. Audra is losing the goodwill of those who, you
32:42
know, like me was sympathetic because she's young and she's autistic and ADHD. And we're open to people being flawed
32:48
and struggling on the internet and making mistakes. So the key question if you've been following all of the rest of
32:54
the drama and all the people on book talk who are going here's how to edit the text. Here's what you could do
33:00
better. Here's why this doesn't work. Why won't she look at her own writing?
33:06
Why? Now this is what I want to talk about from a personal perspective. This is entirely my opinion. So in an earlier
33:13
video obviously highlighted by Meredith again. Thank you very much Meredith. I feel like I'm oversighting here. Order
33:18
actually describes her revision process. She does not go through the text she has. She just rewrites from the
33:24
beginning over and over again. Now, I was confused when I spent literally hours going through her Tik Tok videos,
33:31
seeing so many references to sending things to editors and deadlines for editors and developmental editors. I saw
33:38
one video where she even describes her creative writing professor giving her a positive comment on her work. And I'm
33:45

completely bamboozled because I couldn't quite grasp that you could be studying
33:50
creative writing as a minor and presumably having your work continually
33:56
critiqued in a group in a seminar context and not being pushed to recognize that what you've written needs
34:03
reworking. And bear in mind, I teach at university.
34:08
I I teach a course on science and science fiction. So we aren't writing science fiction but I do spend a lot of
34:15
time working with students and their writing and I don't have much time these
34:20
days to do that specifically but onetoone you know I'm critical I as much as I can I work with students and you
34:26
know you give honest feedback to them you know if the writing is the whole thing then I would hope that there is
34:34
some check there there is some check going on now all of all of Audra's Tik Toks have
34:41
some promotional element after, you know, pretty much it actually gets hard to watch and at times feel icky. There's
34:48
one where she's jumping on a trend to share a book that you really love and it's she recommends her own book and
34:55
yeah, I'm sure loads of people do that, but god no. I I wouldn't do that. I might say, "Oh, this book inspired me to
35:03
write. This book got me like Ursula Ka Gwyn's Earthy or Lord of the Rings or
35:10
I've just finished AdrienChaikovsk's Children of Time. It's a reread but my god that made me respect spiders. Who
35:17
knew that that was possible? But this is what we can do with stories. I think
35:22
what she tries to do is build up this image of herself as super successful.
35:28
She has these paranoid responses to say I am good at this. The creative writing
35:33
professor video where she says, "Oh, I don't know what this character looks like, but he can get it." Is a way of
35:39

saying to the audience, "Here is the proof that I'm good at it. It is good at this." It is a statement of authority
35:45
and of skill that we have no evidence for elsewhere. The narrative of her
35:53
whole account has been, "I have done my 10,000 hours." There's the intensely cringe video where she says, "I have
35:59
done my 10,000 hours." and she actually calculates the hours that she's put in. The standard story that she has for the
36:06
internet is, "I started working on this book when I was 12. I self-published at
36:12
14. I had a literary agent by 18. I am putting this out at 22. Look at how
36:18
young I'm a prodigy. I've already put in my 10,000 hours now." Malcolm Gladwell's book has been picked apart. the whole
36:23
10,000 hours thing if you want a good deep dive into that. I think it was If books could kill the podcast if books
36:30
could kill. That was their first book and they picked that apart. 10,000 hours
36:38
doesn't mean you necessarily are good. So I have two academic careers. I
36:44
started in 1997 and left academia in 2006 for a while. I came back in 2014. I I
36:52
forget I uh have now done 11 years in my second academic career. I still feel
36:59
like I am not a like I am not an expert. I've just I'm just out here trying. So
37:06
yeah. Um I've just started doing pieces on on the Mins and I'm a long way from
37:12
from my 10,000 hours. It's not necessarily a measure of of good quality
37:17
expertise. So that you know there are other videos that deal with her interest in witchcraft and Greek as I've said you
37:24
know Greek parts and national parks the you know mostly it's all about her self-concept. This is a brilliant
37:31
marketing strategy really is going back to that yet to be published book. It's in a fantasy setting. If you love this
37:36
kind of thing you'll love this. These are the vibes. It's just from a marketing standpoint fantastic.

37:42
Okay. you still end up with this horrendous disconnect between what she
37:47
says about herself as a writer and the writing itself. So all of that we're here. This is my
37:55
take as an autistic person with a paracosm world who engages with it
38:01
largely through writing. I mentioned this in my first piece on it, but having
38:07
listened to how she describes her relationship with the world in the long pinned video response and having now
38:13
gone through all of her videos, my opinion that this is a paracosm has intensified. And I am not justifying her
38:21
response. As I start to discuss this and we talk about the concept of the paracosm and self-mythology and
38:28
personal narrative, I am only providing an explanation for why she won't look at
38:33
the text and her struggle to engage with the audience in a way that the audience
38:40
can respect. This is just a personal opinion text. I'm not going to diagnose her with anything. This is simply a way
38:47
of thinking about why she might be struggling with their aspect of what she wants to do. So this is my personal
38:54
story. We have the paracosm element. I used Amnar as a way to process the world
39:00
as I've described and I did it from extreme extremely young age like five or six. So it wasn't called Amnar then and
39:07
it's changed its name and it evolved out of those earlier worlds. I was told I
39:13
could never make a living as an author. Like literally everybody said that. I grew up in the in the 80s. So they were just like, "Oh yeah, you can never make
39:19
money as an author. You have to go and do something else." So I did as I was told. And I ended up studying geography
39:25
my first academic career. I did uh an undergraduate degree, a BSE honors in
39:30
geography and then did little bits of writing around there. I still had the world in my head. My diary has material

39:38
from there. I've still got that. I started my PhD in 2000 and I
39:44
was working on that when I met someone who I actually talked to about the world
39:50
and I hadn't done this in ages because people would just go this is weird and creepy. We don't like this you know be a
39:57
grown-up please and she engaged with it and she was really fascinated by it. She
40:02
got me writing again and she read literally everything I wrote. She was
40:08
insanely supportive and most critically non-judgmental about it. She was keen to
40:16
support me and we had a very intense friendship for around 2 and a half
40:21
years. I radically altered my life with that same goal of I am going to be a
40:27
super successful published author. I'm going to write this book. It was a new version of a story that I had written a
40:33
while ago. it developed out into a seven book series. So by 2006,
40:40
March 2006, I got my PhD and I had seven books in the series,
40:46
two background books, uh, one set in Amnar and one entirely separate. But
40:52
that intense focus on my world and by extension my dreams and goals absolutely destroyed that friendship.
40:59
This is why I'm slightly concerned about the team around her for a couple of reasons, you know, for their sake. They
41:05
seem to be being paid, so it's slightly different structure to the relationship.
41:10
So, I'm worried about her leaning on them that hard and then being that engaged and allowing her to continue to
41:17
engage with the world in a way that becomes overwhelming and means that she doesn't face what she needs to face.
41:24
They're keeping it alive and functioning and she it's great avoidance. And if there's one thing I know about humans
41:31
after and myself after 46 nearly 47 years on this planet is my god we're

41:36
very good at avoiding the one thing we need to deal with. Most stories most really good fiction is people avoiding
41:41
what they're actually supposed to be doing and the joy we get when they finally face up to what they need to face up to. So I I'm concerned about
41:50
that and that again is personal opinion. They allow her to avoid engaging with
41:55
the text in a critical way and with the world in a critical adult way.
42:02
I deeply regret my behavior. I wasn't diagnosed at the time and your own
42:09
reality. This depends on how your autism shows up obviously, but I was also you're also
42:16
young. I was also young and I had no friendships. No real friendships until this point. friendships worked either
42:22
and still struggle with that aspect and will for the rest of my life. That is a
42:29
big part of that. I cannot understate how amazing it is when someone engages
42:35
with your special interest and just lets you run with it. Just cannot. It's this
42:41
overwhelming fascination and it's one of only a few things and the tendency to massively info dump in a way that you
42:48
know if you if you're not autistic you're outside that you people struggle with that. You're just being talked at
42:54
for a lot of the time. It plays into the social communication disability aspect
42:59
to autism that we should not underestimate. It's very easy to look like you are
43:05
competent and you know what you're doing and you're okay and it it's but when you are in a relationship and you're talking
43:11
about that stuff all of the time, you are pressing on those connections that make relationships function and that can
43:18
be devastating and it certainly was and it absolutely broke me in 2006. I have
43:24
only recently begun to deal with that. Now secondly, there's order's big response video which brings out two
43:31

other aspects which is you know feeling everything so intensely when you're autistic and black and white thinking.
43:40
Listening to her describe feeling like this world is everything, you know, very familiar to me when she says she feels
43:46
like she has nothing without this. She this is her whole life. She can't live without it. This is how I talked about
43:52
Amnar in 2006. Oh boy. When that relationship fell apart, I'm just really messed. I I did think like this. I felt
44:01
a great deal of grief and shame at the loss and shame at my, you know, my role
44:07
that this is down to me. This is what I'd done. The pain that I had caused somebody else, the crippling sense of
44:12
failure and hopelessness. And also because I hoped that it had given me a
44:18
way to avoid engaging with the world. I had done some full-time jobs in offices by then. I struggled so much being in an
44:26
office context. I could not do it. I not a thing I could cope with. I really really needed a way to make money that
44:33
did not involve me working in an office. Coffee.
44:42
Um, and this is 2003 to 2005. And you know,
44:47
there isn't working from home really. there isn't the same sense that you
44:52
could get proper support to work in an office and I really struggled and that I
44:58
lost jobs over it. I was only able to get short-term contracts.
45:03
I did not want to do it and the idea of being paid to write fiction in my fantasy world so that I don't have to
45:09
leave the house or engage with people ever at all except on my own terms really deeply appealing. I spoke to
45:15
another friend in the same intense way as Audra does in this video. you know, I shifted weirdly between this is the end
45:21

of the world. I cannot cope with this. I'm still doing this. I'm amazed that that friend, that particular friend was not the same friend. Uh I'm amazed he's
45:28
still around. You know, huge shout out to you if he watches this for always being there and contributing to the
45:34
ongoing where do we put all of this these swords crisis that is going on in our home right now. So, another factor
45:42
to bring up is autistic presentation. Now, I am one of those hyperlexic
45:47
autistics. Um, I was also hyperverbal and evidently so is Audra. I will link
45:53
to something that's actually in the description that is in my text that is about hyperlex and autism. And I think
46:01
that she is hyperlexic, also potentially hyperverbal. If you can talk and you seem very good
46:09
at speech, people underestimate how massively disabled you are. I can talk,
46:14
but I can't function. I could get through job interviews like a superstar back in like 2006, 2007.
46:23
I could talk really well, but I am extremely disabled on the day-to-day in terms of regular communication and
46:29
action. So just because I can talk doesn't mean I can make a phone call. No, that's not happening. I am only
46:37
functional. My partner is my carer. I only have a decent life because I have a
46:42
carer in my partner and he does most of the adulting for me. I have a job, but
46:47
it's part-time and it only exists for seven months of the year. I don't think I could do that job full-time 9 to5. I
46:54
can do research mostly full-time and I'm still not getting paid for that. So, you
46:59
know, sadness, anyone wants to pay me to research the ancient world or various
47:06
other interests, I will do that. Now, all that is to say, it's my personal
47:11
belief that Audra feels and is going through something very much like I did in 2006. So, she is struggling with the
47:17

world as a new adult autistic because that is generally when you discover that you are not very good at living in the
47:22
world. And she's looking for a way to kind of support herself without getting broken. The decision to leave her job
47:28
and start a business based solely on all the pre-orders sounds a lot like the kind of decisions I made prior to 2006.
47:34
And then again, when I was burned out by trying to work full-time jobs in 2007
47:39
and 2008, I have mastered the art of being a cautionary tale. After the
47:46
financial crash, I spent years living on benefits before I went back to university. Now, I want to get back to
47:51
the issue of Audra and the text. This is what it comes down to. In the
47:57
end, all of Audra's crash communications are about fixing the book, but they
48:02
center the art. She does discuss editors of various stripes, but they seem to be
48:07
peripheral to her core team, and the core team are artists. A lot of people have said she should pivot to a graphic
48:14
novel, but she doesn't want this. She wants this to be a novel. And now, it's
48:20
a personal take. You know, I can't see into Audra's head. Everything above not,
48:26
you know, notwithstanding, and everything on going on below notwithstanding either. She does want to be a writer. She does want this to be a
48:33
novel or a series of novels with a lot of art. She does want that written side
48:39
of it, but she resists looking at the actual text. While doing research for, you
48:45
know, this potential video, I found a Tik Tok of hers where she answers an
48:50
audience question and she says, "I hate reading my own writing." She's going to explain who the characters are and
48:56
what's going on. And I think it was a fairly early video, but I can't find that video. It would be absolutely the
49:04
lynch pin of my argument if I could. I can't find it. And I've been through her

49:09
videos. I think I spent an entire Friday after I had written the piece on
49:15
Thursday evening and Friday I spent trying to refind this video. And I'm
49:20
sure it's in there. she turns to her screen and she says,
49:26
"Oh, you know, I'm sorry. I hate reading my own writing." But yeah, that's the
49:31
critical point. I mean, there's enough evidence, I think, in the way that she
49:36
has done everything sort of she she's, you know, she's circling around the text a great deal and she talks about editors
49:42
and sending things to editors. there's very little in terms of uh really talking about the text and an eight-step
49:49
process where only one of those processes is one of those steps is I am
49:54
going to look at this text that's kind of exemplary you know that that kind of enough for this argument so we're going
50:01
to go back and make this all about me again because this was the same struggle I had for a good decade or so maybe even
50:09
more to put it in academic terms looking at the writing ing itself means directly
50:16
engaging with in the gulf between your constructed self- mythology. So the
50:24
mythology that one has about oneself and the reality of the work as it is as
50:30
flawed. For the last couple of years I have been consciously actively working on that problem. I get or I did get
50:40
physical pain looking at my own writing. It was awful. It was horrible. And I
50:47
know it's a common theme in creative discussions of writing where you veer
50:54
between this is amazing and brilliant. I've done amazing work and oh my god I cannot even write. It's so common. So,
51:01
we all feel it, but I think it's magnified by being autistic and it is magnified by the intense pressure of not
51:10
only does this have to be great writing, it has to be the greatest writing

51:15
because you are going to hit the internet by storm, everybody's going to love it. So, oh my god, in the moment,
51:23
you have to make all the right choices. The level of pressure involved there is so intense. I think also there's the
51:30
cruelties of being a black and white thinker also common with autism. I
51:36
certainly struggle with it. Now I will put there are a couple of links down in description around things that I've used
51:42
to kind of you know demonstrate this. I actually did this with my PhD thesis
51:47
both of them. I would prefer to entirely rewrite 80,000 words of academic writing
51:55
than actually engage with the text and just pick it apart as it was. So even
52:00
the kindest feedback made me sick to the stomach and gave me crippling pain. And
52:05
I know again this is very common. One of the companies I work for, she actually has a special session on dealing with
52:10
reviewer comments because it's such an emotionally difficult thing to do.
52:16
So, you know, it's Audra is not alone in this if this is what she's struggling with. Now, I had piles of submitted
52:23
chapters peppered with notes from my panel gathering dust in the corner of the office I worked in while I went back
52:30
and started from scratch. And yes, it was the same with my fiction. I rewrote the first book in the series a number of
52:36
times. Did not improve it really at all. I was starting to practice writing,
52:42
getting the hang of doing some things around plotting and consciously learning all of those skills rather than relying
52:48
on the intuitive sense because I read so many books and was getting good at reading books. I think that's kind of
52:56
what's going on and it gets magnified by being autistic by brain structure and all of those features. Now, what has
53:04

changed for me personally, I got a therapist and we kind of got around to what happened in 2006 when I lost that
53:11
friendship. Actively sitting down and working through my own texts aside from
53:16
learning the other skills of craft. So I did a number of courses and you know all
53:22
the people that I talked to who are professionals in the industry were insanely supportive and I did have to do a lot of work to
53:30
actually just sit with the text and just be upset that I was so painful for Amnar
53:36
and writing fiction specifically. I had to decouple that self- mythology and my
53:41
personal narrative from the work and concentrate on making it all shine.
53:48
Saying, "Oh my god, I've had this world since I was 12 and it's such a big deal and I'm 22." Yeah, that doesn't wash
53:55
when you're 46. Really doesn't wash when you're 22. Doesn't wash when you're 46. Really does not. I wanted I realized
54:02
what I wanted was to make a world that really was impactful to people. And so recconing the world, going through it,
54:09
you know, actively thinking what works, what doesn't work, what are people going to turn around and go, what about uh in
54:16
a bad way. Sometimes you want people to be shocked and sometimes you want people to because you're making a good point,
54:23
concentrating on theme, comp concentrating on really learning the skills of being a writer in that sense
54:30
and the bigger ideas and making sure they work. So it becomes fun to test
54:35
those skills. I've actually really enjoyed. I'm editing the bone moth at the moment and going back and really
54:41
applying skills when I picked up what the theme was and realizing I can now
54:46
hang every scene off that theme and make them work. And instead of just going, I
54:52
really love this world and I want to play around with this world with these exciting, fun characters, going I want

54:59
to lead a reader through this world and have that experience. and thinking about what I love in books,
55:05
which is really good books. I'd like to be devastated. I want to be emotionally, you know, I want to come out of a book
55:11
going, I don't know how I'm going to live. I want to learn that I can sympathize with spiders, you know, thank
55:16
you, AdrienChaikovski. I want to be emotionally turned over by
55:22
by books and and that's what I'm working on doing. And and that is a really difficult set of skills to learn. So,
55:29
I'm actually kind of enjoying it. So paying attention to I think the little whispering voice that goes I think this
55:36
needs to change this needs more development how we think about this that can be really helpful. Now I actually
55:41
started with my academic work my academic writing because I had to do
55:47
that you could put off writing fiction indefinitely it turns out until you die.
55:52
I could not put off doing academic work if I wanted to get some benefit out of
55:59
10 years of research that I had done. So I I started my masters in 2014. I
56:06
started a PhD fully funded in 2017 and I finished in graduated in 2023. Takes a
56:14
long time to do this kind of stuff. So I need to make good use of what I've done
56:20
and the work that I've done there. So I was faced with having to do that. I couldn't just put it off. I can if I
56:27
wanted an academic career, if I wanted to have any impact, then I was going to have to do it. So if I have one
56:33
recommendation for Audra and anyone else who's looking at this going, "God damn, this is me." I know she's probably going
56:40
to hate this advice and I certainly wouldn't take it if it was me and I was 22. Engage with your other deep
56:47

interests from a writing perspective. The ones that carry less emotional
56:52
weight are the ones you can use to learn the skills you need to work with the novel itself. So, write about the Greek
57:00
gods. Stop doing vibes on TikTok. Write about them. Write about witchcraft.
57:06
Write about astrology. How do how does astrology work in this world? What are the intersections? What have you
57:12
changed? What have you taken from that? These are all ways that you can learn writing where you are engaging with an
57:18
audience in a different way. All of those things carry less emotional weight
57:23
and they're not doing as much hard work as the age of scorpius world is.
57:29
So the breakthrough for me weirdly was I decided to write a piece on Mumin Mama's
57:35
handbag. There's like two people who will know about this but I am also a muminologist. I have spent two and a
57:41
half years building a model of the Muin house. And in November last year, I got
57:47
the first book, the reissue of the first book, and I began looking at it, and I thought, "Oh, I've got an idea here. I
57:53
can write something." There was a journal that had a 31st of January, 2026
57:59
deadline. I was grading papers. I was teaching. And I sit down and decide to do this piece on Mama's handbag and do
58:07
new research on that. So, I had this huge tight deadline. I was constrained, but I really wanted to say something. I
58:14
wasn't trying to please people. I wasn't trying to tell anyone I was a great academic.
58:19
All I wanted to do was reach out to some people and say, "Let's talk about Min Mama's handbag. It's really awesome.
58:27
It's really important. It's a vital object. I study objects."
58:32
So that helped uh my academic pieces that are motivated by I need to impress
58:39
a bunch of people with my chops as an as an academic. Totally no good. Lots of

58:46
rejection there. I'm trying to do something that I'm supposed to do and I'm not driven by the sense I have something to say or an argument to make.
58:52
So I in March this year, a call for pictures went out from Strange Horizons,
58:58
which is a weekly science fiction and fantasy magazine that publishes original fiction and non-fiction on science
59:05
fiction. They put out one. They wanted to do aging in science fiction. And I got so invested. I wrote an abstract.
59:11
Now, I was teaching. I wasn't marking, but I was supposed to be working on an entirely different article and a book
59:17
proposal. So I'm trying to turn my PhD into a book. And I was curious about this. I
59:23
got really invested. I thought I have something really important to say here and I wanted to explore it. I was
59:30
comfort reading the expanse series. So I write an entire piece on the expanse series. I waited until I was emotionally
59:38
ready to handle the editor's feedback because I did get the pitch accepted and then it was made the lead article for
59:44
that week that it was going out on the special issue. I got to enjoy clarifying
59:50
what I wanted to say and building a better argument. It is not easy, you know, it can be
59:56
rough. You have to wait for the right time. And then I got into deep dives and I'm reworking things and I'm going and finding new material and I'm reading.
1:00:03
There is a whole book on the philosophy on philosophy and the expanse um that's
1:00:08
been published. Uh fantastic really useful piece of work. So I got that published and that's kind of worth it.
1:00:15
You know, the the point of being creative is that messy, ugly process of
1:00:23
finding the right word, finding the right moment, engaging with your creative output and making it better.
1:00:30
Um, it's got to be hard. It's it's it's a it's a wrestle and um, you know,
1:00:35

that's the important thing about being creative as a as a human being. So, you know, it's all so scary. If I
1:00:42
revise, you know, I have to acknowledge my limitations. I have to face places
1:00:48
where I fall short in my work and where I need to improve, where I deviate from
1:00:54
my personal self- mythology and I don't measure up to my own big talk. And on
1:00:59
the flip side, there's also acknowledging where I might actually be good and
1:01:06
contribute something meaningful in fiction. So when I got the peerreview report back
1:01:13
from the journal that was going to publish the academic version of the Mumin Mama article, the the the headline
1:01:20
you get like a summary response was so positive and complimentary. I actually
1:01:25
felt so sick. I actually had to get up and go outside. I was on holiday on a
1:01:31
canal boat and I actually had to get up and walk out just go, "Oh god, I can't." That also didn't fit with my self-
1:01:37
mythology. Rejections I kind of expect. I'm used to it. Everyone has been telling me since I was 5 years old that
1:01:44
rejections are a standard part of writing. I had not prepared for success. I suspect deep down and this is just my
1:01:51
opinion that Audra's external and this somewhat self arandizing self- mythology
1:01:57
is a veil over that kind of fragility.
1:02:02
Feeling constantly like you are failing at the most basic stuff everyone else
1:02:09
seems to be able to do is a standard feature of being autistic and it's my
1:02:15
kindest read of what has been going on. When you are creating these huge
1:02:20
mythologies about yourself, these standard ways of presenting yourself to
1:02:25
the world that help you understand yourself but also help other people
1:02:31
understand who you are. This is how you present yourself to the world in the simplest way. They also can cover

1:02:38
another self- mythology that is just as insidious, which is the one where you're
1:02:43
nothing and you're worthless. And I think that could they often work
1:02:48
together and in tension with each other. Now, I'm obviously deeply invested in
1:02:54
this story. I'm hoping that Order's next update is going to be the one where she
1:03:01
acknowledges a little more of the reality being projected back to her by her audience and all the people watching
1:03:08
her. I never had to face this much attention.
1:03:14
This is kind of brutal. I I don't know if I would have I don't know
1:03:21
how I would have coped. I had a hate blog kept about me in 2006
1:03:28
quite briefly. I like four maybe 10 people read it. Uh who cares? I'm nobody
1:03:33
on the internet who wants to pay attention to someone who hates me on the internet, you know, especially in the
1:03:40
era before all of this existed. Yes. I I can understand that. I think, yeah, this
1:03:46
is going to be hard. So, going through her videos, while I'm sick to death of
1:03:52
the marketing element, I can see a valuable human being underneath, and I
1:03:59
think a lot of people do. I would really like that human to shine. If I was
1:04:04
giving advice, if I was the adult in the room, and by and by adult I mean someone who's over 40, maybe 50, who's had a
1:04:10
long time on the internet and knows what they're doing, go back to doing the witchy content. Go back to doing ancient
1:04:16
Greek gods. Step up. Leave this whole Elizabeth Holmes thing behind. Just be
1:04:22
you. Just as messy as you are, just say this is hard, but focus on the audience.
1:04:28
Think about this. Deal with the scariest bit itself. go away and revise the text
1:04:35
as everybody is saying and make this into something that that people really want to read in several years time. 22

1:04:42
feels huge and you have lots of time. You have lots of time and
1:04:48
that's all. So, thank you for watching this video. I have not got any other videos. Have a
1:04:55
look at all the other videos I've shared. Let me know what you think. If you got this far, thank you so much for
1:05:00
watching me ramble at length about this strange bit of the internet. I'm going
1:05:06
to try to do more videos. I'm particularly interested in what happens
1:05:12
when people's self- mythology and personal narrative hits the wall of the
1:05:20
audience and just how often people actually hold on to the self- mythology
1:05:26
rather than opening up to what reality might show them. And I think that's a really interesting thing that that
1:05:33
happens on the internet that I'd like to do more work on. Also, maybe I'll talk about the Mumins more and Mumin Mama's
1:05:38
handbag because who doesn't want to hear about Muins? And that's it. Goodbye.

Compiled by Anatole Ternaux - http://deadfrenchmen.rip